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UNHCR ACTIVITIES FINANCED BY VOLUNTARY FUNDS: REPORT FOR 1994-1995 AND PROPOSED PROGRAMMES AND BUDGET FOR 1996

PART II. ASIA AND OCEANIA

Section 2 - Bangladesh

(submitted by the High Commissioner)

GE.95-02376

II.2 BANGLADESH

1. Beneficiary population

1. At 31 December 1994, a total of 116,000 refugees from the Rakhine State in Myanmar were assisted in 15 camps located in the southern part of Bangladesh in Cox's Bazar and Bandarban districts. In addition, as of March 1995, some 170 urban refugees, mostly Somalis, have been assisted in Dhaka.

2. The refugee population was reduced dramatically with the successful voluntary repatriation of over 81,000 refugees, carried out under a bilateral agreement between the Governments of Bangladesh and Myanmar, with the active participation of UNHCR in both countries since the second quarter of 1994. (Details on the voluntary repatriation programme are specifically covered under part II/10 of this document, Regional Special Programmes: Myanmar Repatriation). A further 55,850 refugees returned to Myanmar during the first four months of 1995. According to a head-count carried out at the end of April 1995, a total of 54,500 refugees remained in Bangladesh, accommodated in nine camps.

3. The refugees are mainly Muslims of rural background. They speak a language similar to the Chittagonian dialect, which is widely spoken by the local population in Cox's Bazar district. The majority of the refugees are illiterate. Koranic teaching has been available in the camps.

2. Developments in 1994 and 1995

4. While priority was given to the voluntary repatriation operation, close attention was also paid to care and maintenance activities in order to provide needed assistance for the remaining refugee population in the camps pending a durable solution. During the third quarter of 1994, in the wake of a severe cyclone that had hit the camps on 2 May, major inputs were directed to the rehabilitation of shelters and basic camp facilities, including health centres, latrines and water systems. Costs for these were evaluated at more than $ 1.8 million and were partially met through a reallocation of resources within the 1994 approved budget, and from the education sector which, because of the Government's policy, could not be implemented. Other important activities were carried out according to established plans. No major problems were experienced with respect to the provision of food. Basic food commodities were provided by the World Food Programme. Procurement and distribution of non-food items included compressed rice husks, which were used by the refugee families as cooking fuel and thus contributed to a reduction in tree felling in the vicinity of the refugee camps.

5. Given the repatriation momentum, emphasis during the last quarter of 1994 and the first quarter of 1995 was placed on camp closures and camp consolidation. Particular attention is being given to the UNHCR assets installed in the camps, such as water systems, which after maintenance will, to the extent possible, be handed over to the Government for the local population's use. The care and

maintenance component of the revised 1995 programme will be implemented in a phased manner, taking into account the reduction in numbers of beneficiaries based on the 1994 repatriation movements and departure trends. For budgetary purposes, the planning assumptions previously made for 1995 have been maintained, i.e., that voluntary repatriation movements will have been completed by the end of the year. As of April 1995, however, the trend has been a slow-down in the repatriation movements, a matter that UNHCR believes will need to be resolved bilaterally between the Governments of Bangladesh and Myanmar.

6. With respect to the urban caseload, subsistence allowances, primary education, health care and legal counselling were provided as planned.

7. The implementation of the special programme component covering development projects targeting the affected Bangladeshi villages neighbouring the refugee camps was completed in the second quarter of 1995. At the end of the programme, 113 projects focusing on rehabilitation and construction activities in the sectors of health, water development, sanitation, shelter and education have been successfully implemented.

8. Eight university students, all of them Somali, are attending medical and dental classes in the 1994/1995 academic year.

3. 1996 country programmes

(a) Objectives

9. As stated above, on the basis of the repatriation rate experienced in 1994 and early 1995, it is expected that durable solutions will have been found for Myanmar refugees by the end of 1995. On the other hand, given slow-down trends since April 1995 in the repatriation movements, between 30,000 and 40,000 refugees may still remain in camps in Bangladesh at the end of the year. However, no provision of funds is specifically proposed at this stage for 1996 for assistance to Myanmar refugees in Bangladesh. UNHCR is preparing a contingency plan for basic assistance activities to be provided for any eventual caseload remaining in Bangladesh on 1 January 1996. UNHCR activities in 1996 in Bangladesh will thus focus on assistance to approximately 180 urban refugees, mainly Somalis, who will continue to receive basic assistance to cover their domestic needs, education and health care pending durable solutions such as voluntary repatriation and possibly resettlement for qualifying cases.

(b) Proposed budgets for 1996

10. As no further assistance activities for Myanmar refugees are planned for 1996, at this stage, only limited funds will be required to implement the assistance programme for the urban caseload which will include the continuation of scholarships for the academic year 1996/1997 for eight students.

11. The sectoral breakdown for the initial and revised 1995 and the initial 1996 care and maintenance allocations is as follows (in dollars):

Sector	Initial 1995	Revised 1995	Initial 1996
Food	198,249	66,699	0
Transport	169,722	180,288	125
Domestic needs	1,434,940	858,070	157,435
Water	166,907	138,857	0
Sanitation	747,688	766,880	0
Health/nutrition	1,916,866	1,650,384	4,800
Shelter	1,230,101	1,116,433	0
Comm. services	20,759	14,525	10,100
Education	62,095	7,200	7,200
Legal assistance	63,797	15,494	3,440
Agency op. support	1,240,476	1,128,270	29,800
Total	7,251,600	5,943,100	212,900

(c) **Implementing partners**

12. The programme of assistance for the urban caseload in Dhaka will be managed as in past years by the Dhaka Asania Mission (DAM).

(d) **Programme Delivery and Administrative Support Costs**

13. Variation due to changes in budget parameters are not discussed in the subsequent analysis (Overview of UNHCR Activities, Part I (A/AC.96/845) refers).

(i) **1994 expenditure (all sources of funds)**

14. The 1994 expenditure was lower than revised estimates mainly as a result of under-expenditure in non-staff costs, most significantly under the travel budget. The travel budget had been drawn up on the assumption of frequent staff travel in Cox's Bazar; in the event, this proved unnecessary.

(ii) **Revised 1995 requirements (all sources of funds)**

15. The revised 1995 requirements are lower than initial estimates mainly due to accelerated repatriation movements and gradual scaling down of the operation in Bangladesh Therefore, there is a reduction in local support costs, particularly in the second half of 1995 with 62 posts expected to be discontinued by the end of 1995.

(iii) **Initial 1996 requirements (all sources of funds)**

16. The 1996 initial requirements are principally lower due to the planned closure of Sub-Office Cox's Bazar by March 1996. With the repatriation expected to be completed in 1996, it is planned to retain only four posts in Dhaka to handle the urban caseload.

UNHCR EXPENDITURE IN BANGLADESH

(in thousands of United States dollars)

1994	1995		1996	
AMOUNT OBLIGATED	ALLOCATION APPROVED BY 1994 EXCOM	PROPOSED REVISED ALLOCATION	SOURCE OF FUNDS AND TYPE OF ASSISTANCE	PROPOSED ALLOCATION/ PROJECTION
GENERAL PROGRAMMES (1)				
25.0	–	–	EMERGENCY FUND	–
10,977.7 a/	7,251.6	5,943.1	CARE AND MAINTENANCE	212.9
6.3 b/	–	–	VOLUNTARY REPATRIATION	–
0.2 b/	–	–	LOCAL SETTLEMENT	–
3.9 b/	–	–	RESETTLEMENT	–
2,592.6	1,433.0	1,100.2	PROGRAMME DELIVERY See Overview Tables (Part II)	362.7
13,605.7	**8,684.6**	**7,043.3**	**SUB–TOTAL OPERATIONS**	**575.6**
331.3	261.6	253.9	ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT See Overview Tables (Part II)	121.0
13,937.0	**8,946.2**	**7,297.2**	**T O T A L (1)**	**696.6**
SPECIAL PROGRAMMES (2)				
12.8	25.6	–	EDUCATION ACCOUNT	–
65.3			OTHER TRUST FUNDS Extra–budgetary food	
4,002.7	3,917.3	1,733.0	Assistance to Myanmar refugees	–
368.6	1,301.6	1,383.9	PROGRAMME DELIVERY See Overview Tables (Part II)	166.0
–	88.2	107.8	ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT See Overview Tables (Part II)	45.6
89.4	40.0	71.0	Junior Professional Officer See Overview Tables (Part II)	71.0
4,538.8	**5,372.7**	**3,295.7**	**T O T A L (2)**	**282.6**
18,475.8	**14,318.9**	**10,592.9**	**GRAND TOTAL (1+2)**	**979.2**

a/ of which US$ 2,327 incurred against Other Programmes
b/ obligation incurred against Other Programmes